

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, CO
SUBJECT: POLITICAL SUMMARIES: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY: GOVERNMENT DECISION-MAKING HAS BEEN SLOWED BY THE APPROACHING CHANGE OF ADMINISTRATIONS. COLOMBIAN LABOR LEADERS ALSO ARE LOOKING AHEAD TO A TURBAY GOVERNMENT, BUT WITH DIFFERING OPINIONS. THE GOC SIGNED AN EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL AGREEMENT WITH CUBA IN A NORMAL DEVELOPMENT OF ITS DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. VIOLENCE REAPPEARED IN SOME REMOTE REGIONS OF THE COUNTRY AND A DUBIOUS, UNOFFICIAL ANTI-GUERRILLA ORGANIZATION ANNOUNCED ITS ALLEGED FORMATION. END SUMMARY.

2. SPECULATION ON APPOINTMENTS IN TURBAY GOVERNMENT DOMINATES POLITICAL SCENE. AS REPORTED IN BOGOTA 6208, PRESIDENT-ELECT TURBAY WENT TO EUROPE ON JUNE 25. THOUGH HE IS KNOWN TO HAVE RECEIVED A NUMBER OF CLOSE POLITICAL ASSOCIATES AND OFFICE-SEEKERS AT HIS SPANISH RETREAT, HE HAS THUS FAR
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GIVEN NO INDICATION OF THE LIKELY COMPOSITION OF HIS GOVERNMENT. SPECULATION IS RIFE REGARDING BOTH INDIVIDUAL APPOINTMENTS AND THE EXTENT OF CONSERVATIVE REPRESENTATION IN TURBAY'S CABINET. AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE GOVERNMENT IS FUNCTIONING EVEN LESS EFFECTIVELY THAN USUAL. IN SEVERAL INSTANCES THAT HAVE COME TO THE EMBASSY'S ATTENTION, LAME-DUCK OFFICIALS HAVE DECLINED TO TAKE

ACTION ON PENDING PROJECTS OF SOME URGENCY. COMMENT: IT IS BELIEVED THAT, IN DEFERENCE TO THE NATIONAL FRONT TRADITIONS AND IN RECOGNITION OF THE VERY SIZEABLE VOTE GIVEN BELISARIO BETANCUR IN THE RECENT ELECTION, TURBAY WILL GIVE THE CONSERVATIVES A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF CABINET-LEVEL POSITIONS. WHILE EMBASSY SOURCES ARE UNINFORMED WITH RESPECT TO INDIVIDUAL APPOINTMENTS, IT IS NOW UNCERTAIN WHETHER FOREIGN MINISTER LIEVANO WILL KEEP HIS PRESENT JOB UNTIL THE END OF THE FORTHCOMING UNGA. RATHER, ACCORDING TO A HIGH-RANKING FOREIGN MINISTRY SOURCE, LIEVANO MIGHT STEP-DOWN AS FOREIGN MINISTER AND BE NAMED COLOMBIAN PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UN.

3. LABOR ATTITUDES TOWARD NEW GOVERNMENT. DURING VISITS BY THE POLCOUNS AND LABATT TO THE TWO MAJOR DEMOCRATIC LABOR CONFEDERATIONS, UTC SECRETARY GENERAL TULIO CUEVAS AND CTC SECRETARY GENERAL MANUEL FELIPE HURTADO EXPRESSED STRIKINGLY DIFFERENT ATTITUDES TOWARD THE FUTURE TURBAY GOVERNMENT. CUEVAS WAS OPTIMISTIC THAT TURBAY WOULD BE MUCH MORE OPEN TO DIALOGUE AND AMENABLE TO COMPROMISE THAN LOPEZ. HE SAID LABOR WOULD DELAY ANY NEW INITIATIVES AND GIVE THE NEW GOVERNMENT A CHANCE TO DEMONSTRATE A MORE POSITIVE ATTITUDE. HE WAS ALSO CONFIDENT THAT HIS PASTRANISTA FACTION OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY WOULD RECEIVE A FAIR SHARE OF GOVERNMENT POSTS AND WOULD GET ALONG MUCH BETTER WITH TURBAY THAN IT HAD WITH LOPEZ. CUEVAS DENIED A FBIS REPORT (JULY 7, 1978). THAT THE NATIONAL TRADE UNION COUNCIL (CNS)-- LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COMPOSED OF UTC, CTC, THE COMMUNIST-DOMINATED CSTC AND THE SMALL SOCIAL CHRISTIAN CGT--WOULD PRESENT DEMANDS TO THE NEW GOVERNMENT BEFORE IT TAKES OFFICE. ACCORDING TO CUEVAS, THE UTC FELT EACH CONFEDERATION SHOULD MAINTAIN ITS OWN SEPARATE RELATIONS AND SPEAK JOINTLY ONLY ON PURELY TRADE UNION MATTERS OF COMMON INTEREST. HURTADO WAS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE NEW TURBAY GOVERNMENT, WHICH HE SAID WOULD BE AS BAD AS ALL THE OTHERS, AND IN WHICH HE AND OTHER CTC LEADERS SAW LITTLE PROMISE.

4. COLOMBIA-CUBA SIGN EDUCATIONAL-CULTURAL AGREEMENT. A COLOMBIAN DELEGATION, HEADED BY EDUCATION MINISTER RIVAS, SIGNED AN EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL AGREEMENT WITH THE CUBANS DURING A VISIT TO HAVANA (BOGOTA 6208 AND HAVANA 1985). THE COLOMBIAN MISSION, THE FIRST OF A MINISTERIAL-LEVEL TO VISIT CASTRO'S CUBA, ALSO AGREED TO ESTABLISH A MIXED COMMISSION TO IMPLEMENT THE ACCORD. COMMENT: DESPITE THE RELATIVELY HIGH LEVEL OF THE COLOMBIAN MISSION, THIS AGREEMENT, WHICH HAS RECEIVED SCANT PUBLIC ATTENTION HERE, SEEMS TO REPRESENT A NORMAL STEP IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TWO COUNTRIES' RELATIONS, IN KEEPING WITH COLOMBIA'S POLICY OF ACCEPTING IDEOLOGICAL PLURALISM.

5. VIOLENT INCIDENTS INCREASE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. VIOLENCE FLARED AGAIN IN THE CRIME-RIDDEN GUAJIRA REGION OF COLOMBIA WHEN A GROUP OF FORTY APPARENT BANDITS REPORTEDLY RAIDED A SMALL TOWN SOUTH OF RIOHACHA AND KILLED SIX OF THE VILLAGERS. A CITY OFFICIAL WAS MURDERED IN THE REMOTE EMERALD MINING AREA OF BOYACA, RAISING THE SPECTER OF RENEWED VIOLENCE BETWEEN RIVAL GROUPS INVOLVED IN THE EMERALD INDUSTRY. GUERRILLAS WERE RELATIVELY INACTIVE BUT ONE UNIDENTIFIED GROUP RAIDED A SMALL TOWN IN THE NORTHERN DEPARTMENT OF CORDOBA. IN THIS REGARD, THERE WERE NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS OF A NEW GROUP, CALLING ITSELF THE ANTI-COMMUNIST MOVEMENT (MAC), BEING ORGANIZED IN BUCARAMANGA. THE DUBIOUS NEW ORGANIZATION'S COMMUNIQUE CRITICIZED LEFTIST GUERRILLA GROUPS AND WARNED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THEM THAT IT WOULD TAKE RETALIATORY ACTION. THE COURT-ORDERED RELEASE THIS WEEK OF INDIVIDUALS ARRESTED DURING THE SEIZURE OF A LARGE COCAINE SHIPMENT LAST FALL, AND OF OTHER INVOLVED IN ONE OF THE SPECTACULAR KIDNAPPINGS OF LATE 1977, ADDED TO THE GENERALLY HELD BELIEF THAT COLOMBIA'S JUDICIAL SYSTEM IS IN DIRE NEED OF REFORM. DREXLER

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